

Four Rivers Lottery Transition to National Recreation Reservation System

Issue: The Forest Service is moving its boating lottery and reservation process for four rivers in central Idaho and eastern Oregon to an entirely online process hosted by the NRRS.

Overview:

Starting December 2009, the Forest Service will manage all float reservations for the wild section of the main Salmon, Selway, Hells Canyon of the Snake, and Middle Fork of the Salmon entirely online. The new system replaces an obsolete, paper-based lottery. It also replaces technology and database management functions that we are losing the capability and expertise to support and provide a more secure environment for the privacy information that our clients need to provide.

The lottery runs annually from December 1 to January 31. Those dates won't change under the new system. The lottery allocates permits for each river's most popular floating seasons, called "control seasons". Control seasons occur between May and September; specific dates vary from river to river.

Under the old system people were limited to one application per season. An application could contain four launch date choices on any of the four rivers - four possible trips. The application fee was \$6.

Under the new system, people may apply for up to four dates on each of the four rivers. However, they will have to submit an application for each of the four rivers, each costing \$6. Applicants will now find out in a matter of days, instead of weeks, if they got their permits.

In addition to moving the permit lottery to an entirely online process, these four rivers will use this new system to allocate all reservations, including reassigning cancellations. The Middle Fork and wild section of the main Salmon Rivers will also use this online system to assign pre- or post-season reservations which occur outside their control season. This new system will also be used to process the payment of recreation fees for the Middle Fork and the main Salmon Rivers.

Changes apply to the lottery (allocation) method; neither the number of permits nor the available launches will change. Any future fee changes will be implemented under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. This plan does not deal with fee issues beyond the year 2010.

Key Points:

- The Forest Service has used online cabin and campground reservations for many years. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota currently uses an online lottery system that works well.
- The web address is www.recreation.gov.
- The new system allows applicants to list as many as 16 launch date choices, four for each of the four rivers in just one visit to the recreation.gov website.
- We'll post safety alerts on the latest river conditions on the recreation.gov website.
- The information entered online is secure and private.
- The lottery will run faster, smoother, and more reliably. By eliminating the workload of handling thousands of paper permit applications, Forest Service staff will be free to answer questions and address river issues instead of doing paperwork.